

Museums Alaska welcomes new President: Jane Lindsey



*Jane Lindsey
Juneau-Douglas City Museum
Director*

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It is with great pleasure that I move into the seat as President of Museums Alaska. Our board welcomes new Museums Alaska board member, Della Hall. Della lives in Fairbanks and works for the University of Alaska Museum of the North as a Curatorial Assistant in the Ethnology and History Department and is also a part-time collections manager at the Pioneer Air Museum. Her abilities are impressive as is her education, and we look forward to her participation to benefit our members.

Serving Museums Alaska is important to me. As the Director of a small museum in Juneau, I have a great respect for our field as we cultivate, collect, and preserve our public trust collections. My children have grown up volunteering for the museum, attending and helping at exhibit openings,

public presentations, and classes. For me and my family, it is simply our way of living fully in our community. I see this when I travel to our annual Museum Alaska/ Alaska Historical Society conferences as well. The community support of our cultural institutions no matter what phase of development they are in is always apparent.

Cordova was no exception, community members came together to support our profession as the first group in their dynamic new Museum and community space. Juneau 2016 will be a catalyst for the possible as we continue to experience community pride and best practices in the new Alaska State Libraries, Archives, and Museum.

It is important that each of you renew and become a member of Museums Alaska. This support is critical for our work and our connection

with you. If you have an institutional membership, become an individual member. Take a further step and also join the Alaska Historical Society, our conference and professional history partner. Your ideas, thoughts, and perspectives are important to us; please contact me with your thoughts about the future of Alaskan Museums and Cultural Centers. If you step back and look at the growth and direction of Museums Alaska in the last five years you will see that we are listening, working, and partnering for the health and longevity of your organization.

**Jane Lindsey
Museums Alaska
President**

Director's Note

Museums Alaska has been hard at work since the conference in Cordova.

The fall cycle for both the Art Acquisition Fund and the Collections Management Fund grants has concluded. Beginning this fall, a new committee has been implemented to review applications for the AAF Program. In addition to the new review committee, the AAF will also transition to an online application beginning with the 2016 spring cycle. Thank you to both the committee members who volunteered their time and expertise and to the institutions for their applications. See pages 4-5 for the listing of the fall Arts Acquisition Fund and Collections Management Fund awards.

Our Advocacy Committee has been planning the 2016 Juneau Fly-In. This session, the Advocacy committee will continue work on HB 52 and SB 61, companion bills which establish a museum construction grant program that will

assist our many aging facilities with renovation and reconstruction needs. This system will allow our professional community to prioritize funding for projects that are "shovel ready." The Advocacy committee is recruiting and preparing strong supporting testimony. In addition to the work on HB 52 and SB 61, the Fly-in continues Museums Alaska's work with the Culture Humanities Arts Museum Partners (CHAMP), other statewide groups that share a vision of arts, history, and culture in Alaska. We hope you'll join our efforts in any way you can.

Conference planning will get underway again in late winter and early spring. If you're interested in being involved look for an announcement from our new Program Committee Co-chairs, Molly Conley and Hayley Chambers.

Enjoy the articles in this issue of Network from our conference scholarship winners. We are growing our scholarship fund to support more conference travel next year for your professional development.

Please keep Museums Alaska in mind as you make your year-end contribution choices.

Happy Holidays!

Bianca



Bianca Carpeneti
Museums Alaska
Executive Director

If you haven't already...

Renew your Museums Alaska membership



Summary of 2016 membership rates:

Individual

\$20 Student
\$40 Individual
\$60 Professional
\$100 Patron
\$500 MUSE

Organization

\$40 Budgets under \$50,000
\$60 Budgets under \$100,000
\$120 Budgets under \$250,000
\$180 Budgets over \$250,000
\$300 Corporate Sponsor

Benefits and services you don't want to miss!

FREE admission to Alaska museums and cultural centers, Network newsletter, discounted conference fees, eligibility for scholarships, advocacy for your organization and the sector at the state and national levels, development of new grants for the museum sector.

Museums Alaska Grants in 2015

Museums Alaska is pleased to administer two funds for the Rasmuson Foundation: the Art Acquisition Fund and the Collections Management Fund. Each have two grant cycles during the year.

NEXT DEADLINES:

Collections Management Fund:
March 30, 2016

Art Acquisition Fund:
April 15, 2016

2015 ART ACQUISITION FALL AWARDS:



partnership



Alaska State Museum	\$18,000
Alaska Veterans Museum	\$7,500
Alutiq Mus. & Arch'l Repository	\$525
Anchorage Museum	\$8,675
Cordova Historical Museum	\$3,300
Hammer Museum	\$1,500
Kawerak Cultural Ctr	\$5,000
Palmer Museum	\$7,500
Sheldon Museum & Cultural Ctr	\$21,000
Sheldon Jackson Museum	\$14,300
Sitka History Museum	\$21,000
UAMN	\$35,000

Museums Alaska and Rasmuson Foundation Support Collections Care and Preservation

COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT FUND GRANTS FALL 2015

Thank you to all the applicants for their submissions. The Grants Committee was pleased to see the range and scope of the projects in the Fall round of applicants, and it looks forward to the Spring round (due March 30, 2016). In total, \$100,000 will be awarded to Alaska museums and cultural centers.

Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository \$782 for care of metals

Valdez Museum & Historical Archive \$1,000 for map collection care

University of Alaska Museum of the North \$1,000 for preserving an ethnographic film collection

Palmer Museum of History and Art \$2,527 for photography collections management project

Wrangell Museum \$3,000 for art collection preservation project

Alaska Aviation Museum \$3,200 for display stanchions

Sheldon Museum and Cultural Center \$6,691 for archives storage expansion

Ilnaka Cultural Center / Native Village of Eyak \$6,759 for tribal archive updating

Hammer Museum \$7,246 for catalogue clean-up

Jilkaat Kwaan Heritage Center \$7,632 for exhibit mannequin and display cases

City of Ketchikan Museum Department \$7,831 for totem pole fragment inventory and rehousing project

Engaging audiences and community support, part I: building community support

Ashleigh Reed

Since being hired as the first paid position of Executive Director at the Hammer Museum in Haines, it has been a goal of mine for the museum to have a stronger presence in the community. We are often seen as a museum for tourists, not necessarily for locals. I have learned while working towards this goal, I would like to participate in more local events, but our resources only allow for a few things. I have been asking myself *how* to participate more with the same time and resources we have.



View from above of the atrium in the new Cordova Center

Attending my first ever Museums Alaska Annual Conference was going to provide the answers to these questions. I was looking forward to attending for months. After all, the MA's theme was *Joining Forces: Museums, Communities & Collaboration*. I was especially looking forward to attending the workshop entitled *Engaging Audiences & Community Support, Part I: Building Community Support*. The first presenters in this workshop were Natalie Wadle and Amy Steffian of the Alutiiq Museum located in Kodiak. They shared how they turned the restoration of a caribou parka into a community effort by engaging their elder natives in teaching sewing techniques to the locals and youth. It took two years to revitalize Alutiiq skin sewing traditions by stitching a parka for the Alutiiq Museum's collections.

The second presenter was Helen Alten of the Sheldon Museum & Cultural Center located in Haines. She was hired as the new director in November 2013. Right away it was apparent that the museum was too quiet and visitors were too infrequent. Children at her kids' school even referred to it as the "boring museum." Immediately she knew the place needed a little reinvention. She focused her presentation on the museum's community involvement and its transformation over the past 18 months. By the end of this workshop, I was both inspired and motivated to take these ideas back to the Hammer Museum.

Some of these included:

- Recognizing the needs of our community and the ways that the museum can fulfill those needs.

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- Collaborating with local organizations for special programs and events.
- Offering well rounded programs so that all ages can participate.
- Finding your museum's unique character and taking advantage of it.
- Doing the best you can with what you have.
- Getting locals excited! Getting them involved! Using your resources!
- Pursuing the small picture more often.
- Don't be afraid to try new ideas.

Even though these are simple ideas, the outcome of the actions are profound. They will have a long and lasting impact not only on your museum, but most importantly your community. Remember to fail early & often to succeed sooner!



Ashleigh Reed
Executive Director
Hammer Museum, Haines

Collections on the Move

Cynthia "CJ" Jones

Wallet, Lotus, 'The Package,' Wrap Around and, best of all, Candies in a Box. What do all these items have to do with Moving Collections? Read on.

Andrew Goldstein, Scott Carrlee and Cindy Jones (CJ) discussed three very different collection moves, both in scale and in circumstance. Most of you are aware of the SLAM project and some were involved with moving Alaska State Museum's 35,000 or so objects through a tunnel from a leaky old building into a shiny new building. The Valdez Museum and Historical Archive had to pack up their collection, move out, store it and then move it back into a renovated Annex building. The Sheldon Museum had the simplest move:



CJ Jones
Haines, AK

The collection we'll move down the stairs soon,
 To its own little have-no-more-cares room,
 So we'd make it all right,
 Storing it tight,
 Side by side.
 (To the tune of Side by Side. Words by Nancy Nash, 5/24/2001)

All these projects had their own challenges, and combined, the salient points are:

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Jones continued...

I. Plan a lot.

- ASM found Carrlee's legos to



Carson
be quite useful:

- Plan your collection storage space (new or repurposed). Determine the size and configuration of your collection to determine your shelf, cabinet and drawer needs. (Greg Moak of Spacesaver helped me a lot.)
- Funding is important: general budget, grants, state appropriations, Rasmuson Foundation, donations, fundraisers, staff and volunteers.
- Plan your packaging, moving, re-storing and documenting of objects before you start.
- Plan the workforce needed to accomplish each of your goals.
- Plan the time needed for the project -- triple it!
- Plan a community party at the end to show off your new storage!

II. Plan big.

- If you have the luxury, plan space for 50 years of collecting--then double the size.
- To maximize any space that you might have, use shelving units on wheels to eliminate aisle space and fit more in. Better yet, compacting (shelves roll together on a track) storage rolls together into a "big box" of shelves and drawers. This provides better environmental control.

III. Organize and train the troops.

- Even if you are only walking objects from one room to another, you will need not just bodies, but people trained in proper handling and moving techniques. Recruit your volunteers and hold training sessions: lifting, moving, wrapping, packaging, documenting, etc.
- Andrew had the luxury of Coast Guard help in Valdez. If you are looking for a large group of people, some communities might call on the National Guard or service organizations. Everyone has a Fire Department. Ambulance people are trained in precise and careful lifting/moving.
- ICS, the Incident Command System, is a proven way to organize any incident -- fires, earthquake or hurricane relief, and collection moves! We have taught it at Museums Alaska workshops as part of disaster training. The ASM is successfully using it in their move.

IV. Document, document, document!

- Before placing anything on your shelves, create a shelf by shelf location system. Andrew and I used the same system for our compacting storage. Each row is a letter A,

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Jones continued...

B, C, etc. Each column of shelves in each row is a number 1, 2, 3, 4. Each shelf in a column is numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, etc. Shelves don't have to be in order. An object's location might read: 'Collection Storage A4 2'. That would stand for: Row A, Column 4, Shelf (or Drawer) 2.

- At the Sheldon Museum where we simply moved objects from one storeroom to another, we set up an assembly line. I organized the storeroom and had like objects brought down together. Items were inspected and repackaged. The Object was located in PastPerfect: the new location and any condition changes were noted.
- When repackaging, the ASM literally tagged all objects with conservation needs. As the Conservator now walks through storage, those objects are visible!
- When an object is re-shelved in the new storage, its location should be *immediately* noted in your collections management program.

V. Packaging and Relocating

- Create dedicated packing areas with all materials nearby.
- Label boxes and document contents.
- Have a tracking system in place for temp storage and final placement.
- Strategize different categories of items separately: archive vs. objects; size and shape; sensitive materials; oversized objects, etc.
- Locate safe, secure offsite storage with environmental controls if possible. Be creative. Andrew stored sensitive items at the local bank.

VI. Above all: **Communicate!**

- Often and with all. Also, hold regular meetings throughout planning and execution.
- Everyone has ideas, so listen.
- Don't be afraid to consult and ask questions. Scott: 888-913-6873; Andrew 907-835-2764; CJ 907-766-2018

Go to the nearest chocolatier to fill your Candies in a Box? No! Wallet, lotus, package wrap and candies in a box are all packaging styles designed by ASM for use with different shaped objects. Use the 'Wallet' for flat things; 'Lotus' for fat roundish things; 'The Package' (think Birthday) for long 3D things; The 'Wrap Around' for large things; and 'Candies in a Box' for small items.



Wallet



Lotus



Package



Wrap



Candies in a box

Two Talks and Tracing Roots: A Weaver's Journey

Ellen Frankenstein

How do we engage people? What makes a place, an object or a time line from the past come alive? Two talks from the Alaska Historical Society and Museums Alaska Joint Annual Conference in Cordova resonated with response to those questions and echoed what brought me to the conference.

After the opening reception, Wednesday night, Captains Bob Bernard and RJ Kropchak gave the first talk, "Retracing the Canadian Arctic Expedition of 1913." Bob Bernard started, sharing his journey to retrace this landmark expedition into then unknown parts of the North. It was a humble, heartfelt and honest account of what this quest meant. Bernard made no attempt to hide the missteps and struggles of retracing the quest that led to the death of his great-uncle and the men he died with. Next, Kropchak spoke using illustrations from his journals that added color and beauty to the accounts.

One thing that struck me from the talk was Bernard's account of a plaque. The plaque honored the men near where they died. It was taken down and almost didn't get put up again. I thought about the contrast between on the one hand listening to Bernard tell this story along with Kropchak's illustrations and the other hand, seeing or perhaps not seeing a plaque standing as an object in a public place without that context. The stories and images shaped my sense of names and dates. They added a layer that can get lost over time and separation from an event and the people involved in it. And that resonated as a reminder of how valuable it is to pass along images stories, words, voices that help generate connection and give meaning to a viewer.

The second talk I want to mention was given by Dr. Lath Carlson, Executive Director of the Living Computer Museum in Seattle called, "The Really Useful Museum." In his keynote address Carlson emphasized the transformation of museums from being places to visit to being used, relevant community resources. One image that lingers for me is a slide he put up of a park bench. Lath used this image to illustrate that point of how people **use** a picnic table, bringing their food and families to a public place and making time at the park their own. He also talked about how the digital shift in our lives creates challenges and opportunities. If we can click our way to the Google Art Project and get closer to the Mona Lisa



*Delores Churchill & Ellen Frankenstein
Photo Credit: Hall Anderson*

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Frankenstein continued...

online than we can in person, why go to a museum? Or as Lath reminded us, this is a kind of provocation for museums to recreate themselves and perform different functions. He shared examples of using museums as social spaces that bring people together to do something far different than a search engine can.

In that spirit of thinking about engagement, I came to the conference to share the 35 minute film “Tracing Roots: A Weaver’s Journey.” It seemed relevant as an illustration of the life and the meaning of an object. It is about the story and the questions that are core to what we discover, collect and display. The documentary also underscores the complex work of curating and the power of collaboration between curator and community.

I’ll step back to provide a boilerplate synopsis: the film. “Tracing Roots” is a heartfelt glimpse into the world of Haida elder and master weaver Delores Churchill. The four year in the making, 35-minute documentary follows Delores on her journey to uncover the origins of a spruce root hat discovered at the Kwäday Dän Ts’ınchi, also known as the Long Ago Person Found site, in a retreating glacier in the Northern Canada. Her search to understand the roots of the woven hat crosses cultures and borders, and involves artists, curators and scientists. The documentary raises questions about understanding and interpreting ownership, knowledge and connection.

Delores has traveled to museums all over the world. As I write this we are in fact on tour to the Eiteljorg, the Harvard Peabody and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. We’re showing the film and as Delores heads into attics and basements collections to study baskets, robes and hats. Traveling with Delores I’ve witnessed the awe and the respect she has for these pieces and the places that take care of them. Her knowledge, passion and energy infect the collections and repatriation staff ever where ever we go. White coated and latex gloved professionals light up, add notes and new understanding to the catalogued objects on shelves and in archival grey boxes. It is a privilege to witness these back stage moments that bring artist and culture bearer, objects and museum staff together.

As I thought about showing the film in Cordova, I also began to think about the parallels between making a documentary and curating and creating exhibits. After all both require an ability to organize and transform ideas (or objects) and information, a lot of decision making on what to present and how, and collaboration with the participants and the the public. I think this process is transformative, with or without a camera. I know my sense of stewardship and care taking for the stories films pass on and the people they portray and my concerns over missteps and compromises along the way, continues to evolve and grow. My hope is that this continual education and all that that collaborators like Delores Churchill share resonates back to the people who watch, listen and use these documentaries.

For more information on Tracing Roots go to www.tracingrootsfilm.com

Delores Churchill at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. With Stephen Loring (Arctic Studies Program, SHMNH) and Naimah Muhammad (Public Programs Coordinator). Photo credit: Ellen Frankenstein



Inspired Cultural Preservation

Faith Revell

Three spirited Alaskan Native women summoned their deep faith, embraced tradition and practice, collaborated with knowledge keepers, and partnered with experts to change the cultural landscape in their communities. They created vibrant gathering places, where showing respect, eliciting trust, valuing shared “treasures” and speaking from the heart formed the mainstay. They came together in *Spotlight on Tribal Museums and Cultural Centers* and reminded me of a “small group of thoughtful, committed citizens” who “can ‘only’ change the world” as described by anthropologist Margaret Mead.

LaRue Barnes, former CEO and builder of the Illanka Cultural Center, in a powerful presentation cautioned planners and dreamers, “Don’t be intimidated by being small, you can do great things.” She reminded museum professionals that we hold someone’s treasure in trust; that it was important to positively impact local native communities.

To get started on a project, collaborate with and learn from people you already know prompted Barnes. “Open your mouth for the speechless. Be the voice of the past and for future generations. They need to know where they came from.”

Eva Malvich, Director of the Yupiit Piciryarait Museum in Bethel, echoed Barnes’ sentiment saying that “It is never too late to find out who you are. Associate who you are by where you came from. I am still learning.”

While Malvich’s tribally run museum is small, 1448 square feet, its impact is large. Built in the 1960’s, its collections originated from what people found in their backyards or discovered on beach walks. Today, Malvich describes a community-centered repository of



Eva Malvich, Director of Yupiit Piciryarait Museum in Bethel

“treasured gifts” and home to a vibrant menu of traditional learning where fish skin sewing is taught and contemporary artists make new things, inspired by the past.

Malvich describes a future cultural center that addresses spirituality and traditional healing and reintroduces the idea of Qasgiq, a communal men’s house, where young boys were sent to learn. Homeless men sheltered nearby hang out at the cultural center in 2015. “People come in and feel welcome and valued,” says Malvich. “I have a heart.” There were no homeless people in the village in the past.

Concept and vision can change when creating a cultural center explained Amy Russell-Jamgochian, Acting Cultural Center Program Director at Kawerak, Inc., an AK Native non-profit consortium located in the Bering Strait region of AK that serves 20 tribes. And thoughtful naming can solidify intent.



LaRue Barnes (left) former CEO of the Ilanka Cultural Center in Cordova

Russell-Jamgochian described how original plans for the Seward Peninsula’s new “Beringia Center” evolved over time along with its nature and name. Envisioned first as a single-structured museum facility, it will soon co-exist in a shared space, the new Richard Foster Building, as a cultural center and open in 2016. It will be called the Katirvik Cultural Center, Katirvik meaning “gathering place” in King Island Inupiaq.



At the heart of each of these three institutions are remarkable efforts by dedicated “citizens” to preserve heritage and culture in new and old ways for future generations.

*Faith Revell
Curator of Education & Public Programs
Valdez Museum & Historical Archive*

CAN YOU SPELL...

Sesquicentennial? It’s coming right up in 2017! Watch for updates on how your museum can participate in this anniversary and commemoration of Alaska’s purchase from Russia. See page 21.

The Triple “D” of Archives

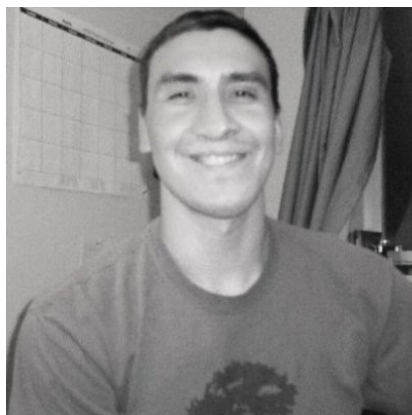
Hans B. Shaeffer

Whether big or small, digital archives have a universal foundation that requires some basic set of rules. Rules? Yes, rules are important no matter what line of work you are in. The workshop on Digital Preservation at Small Museums with Hannah Streicher provided some very fundamental rules. Streicher’s work at the Baranov Museum provided her participants with a wonderful overview of the successes and challenges that she faced during her internship. While it was a case study on practical solutions, the workshop focused on three main areas: digital collection; digital management; and digital preservation.

Digital collections are basically an organized group of objects. Building a good digital collection can be a daunting task because archivists often feel they are not doing it right. In fact, building anything is sometimes easier said than done. No matter what the case – your digital collection will survive based on one fact -- you can’t do everything but you can do something. The workshop stressed the importance that any digital collection requires an active engagement to keep moving forward.

The lifecycle of digital collections can often be short lived because we forget how fast technology moves. If we consider how many iPhones we’ve seen in our lifetime then we’ll know that technology is cruising at an incredible pace. The technological changes seriously affect any digital collection because we are inevitably faced with the growing reality of obsolescence. Our digital collection must have the ability to keep growing with the changing technologies and requires good digital management.

Developing a good digital management plan early in the archiving process can help any collection decide what is most important from least to greatest. Every digital collection may have its share of born-digital content, but a majority most likely began as some physical form. The desire to keep everything is common, but the workshop identified a few key components to consider.



A good digital management plan will consider whether the collection has a level of usability, accessibility, and fits within the scope of the organization. As the presenter noted, each organization should answer the question of why their work is important. Starting with

Continued...

*Hans B. Shaeffer
Inupiak Digital Technician
Aqqaluk Trust (Kotzebue)*

Schaeffer continued...

why will certainly gear a digital management plan in the right direction. The workflow of any digital management plan will sometimes overlap with digital preservation.

Digital preservation can often be confused with digitization. The workshop discussed the importance of digitization .vs. digital preservation. One of the differences is that digital preservation keeps a collection maintained to ensure each of the objects are being formatted or updated as changes takes place. Digitization might just be narrowed down to moving a collection from its analog form to a digital one. Digital preservation really keeps the collection alive and well.

One major point was mentioned by the presenter which could be relevant to any of these three areas. No matter what the successes or challenges may be, always remember that all technology will fail. Instead of asking the question why, be sure to keep in mind the question of when and be prepared. When technology does fail, it is always important to make sure you keep a back-up of your digital collection. A good practice is to have at least three back-ups for every digital collection. Yes, be proactive and remember the triple D of archives.

Thanks, Nicholas Cage

Kyndra White-Hunt

Remember the days when you could watch a movie without getting mad or annoyed at it because you didn't know that when handling an antique document you must be wearing the right kind of gloves? Or how about the thought of putting lemon juice on an artifact not terrifying the living daylights out of you? Three years ago, before my start in museums, I loved watching movies like "National Treasure" because, well, I didn't know better. The more I learn about museum practices, the more I realize my love of pop culture movies will never be the same. Thanks, Nicholas Cage, for putting your oily fingers all over the Declaration of Independence. Not cool.



The Cordova Center in the morning sunshine.

For a lot of us here, whether we started in libraries, education, or even tourism, we never thought we would be brought into the wonderful world of museums. And thus, learning as we go is something we have adapted to and embraced. Thankfully, at this year's Museums Alaska conference in Cordova, Angela Linn and Helen Alten got together to teach us newbies a thing or two on how to take in and care for new objects.

- We learned very important things such as:
- Assigning every object an object number and making a paper trail as soon as it walks in the door whether you

Continued...

White-Hunt continued...

decide to put it into your collections or not.

- Bugs are the worst; isolate your objects before putting them in your collections room.
- Drop offs require a lot more work than you think. You must find the rightful owners before they can become part of your collections or go through the long process of obtaining legal ownership of the objects yourself.
- What different wear and tear looks like and how to identify it as such so you can properly describe the conditions of an object.
- When documenting said an object use lemans terms that way over the years the words will still be understood and language translation will be a sinch.
- Try to always use nitro gloves when handling, never cotton or nylon.
- Objects degrade 5 times faster in living conditions compared to the correct humidity and heat controls.
- There's the correct way to label and number objects without hurting them.
- And lots more!

Whether you were experienced, new or Nicholas Cage, pretending to steal a priceless artifact, this was a great refresher course on the basics. I'm so very glad I was able to go to Cordova; in all, everyone was just so welcoming and willing to help myself and others learn. I may be yelling at the TV more often but at least I know how to properly treat my collections.

Don't even get me started on Indiana Jones...

*Kydra White-Hunt
Museum & Visitor Information Services Coordinator
Palmer Museum & Visitor Information Center*



Museum, science, art, and education: can we do this program together?

Sam Dinges

My name is Sam Dinges, and I am the Museum Aide at the Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla. As an emerging member of the museum profession, I found the 2015 Museums Alaska Conference to be extremely informative. The Angel Project and four days of workshops, presentations, and engagement with fellow professionals from around the state taught me a number of valuable lessons regarding cataloguing, outreach, and object care.

At the Dorothy Page, we have been focusing heavily on using our space as a platform for community engagement. With this mission in mind, I attended the Museum, Science, Art, &

Continued...

Dinges continued...

Education: Can we do this Program Together workshop in the interest of better understanding the relation between conservation and community outreach. Led by Wendy Goldstein, Maite Agopian, and Gabrielle Vance, the seminar began with presentations on past successful education programs. Each leader gave unique examples of work they had done, covering single person staff museums to large institutions like Museum of the North. Following the presentations, the presenters broke the attendees into two groups and we held a seminar style discussion on different approaches and strategies for facilitating events that offer a more interactive atmosphere with the hosting museum.

For me, the workshop was very applicable. Even as a new member of the field, I identified with many of the concerns regarding staffing events and the drain they can pose on fiscal and energy resources. Two useful ideas I came away with were an expanded view of how conservation staff could be more involved in museum events and the importance of keep a variety of theme so as to maintain patron interest. Having just finished setting up for and executing out Old Town Autumn Fest fall celebration, I was happy to be able to observe the relevance of my workshop experience in action.

I am very thankful to Museums Alaska both for facilitating this wonderful learning experience and for the generous scholarship they provided, enabling me to participate. I look forward to attending many more conferences like this one!

Sam Dinges
Museum Aide
Dorothy Page Museum (Wasilla)

The Safe Place: or how to be a really useful museum

Maïté Agopian



How are a museum, a park, and a library similar? Our keynote speaker Lath Carlson (Executive Director, Living Computer Museum, Seattle) described these three spaces as non-commercial, social, and safe. He made the case that a museum should be more than a place to visit, an enjoyable space for the community to be in and to use, much like a park or a library. While Lath Carlson's talk was titled "The Really Useful Museum", I deliberately am emphasizing one of his main concepts: the museum as a safe place.

As an educator who recently joined the exhibit team at the University of Alaska Museum of the

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A safe place nurture deeper engagement, creativity, and true collaboration". From *Art in the Making*, Special Exhibit, 2012, Courtesy of UA museum of the north.

Agopian continued...

North, some ideas resonated particularly. For example, greeting our guests by saying “Welcome to *your* museum”; installing picnic tables for groups to enjoy and use; finding innovative ways to best utilize the museum’s empty spaces at different times of the week; inviting each staff member on the museum floor to share his or her own expertise; or trusting our public by letting them handle (or take home) museum objects. While some ideas seem to be simple, easy to implement options, others might only make sense depending on the size of our institution.

Another thought that resonated with my practice was the importance of designing safe environments in our exhibits for the public to interact with our collections. By doing so, we allow visitors of all ages to engage in deeper dialogues and enjoy a more meaningful experience. To that end, I appreciated the sentiment that it is important for us to feel safe within our own institutions first before we can provide the same for our community. Some of these include the freedom to not be afraid to try and “fail”; making sure we ask our community what their needs are; prototyping and testing our ideas before we create exhibits; having the opportunity to engage, connect, and collaborate among ourselves; and even feeling secure about our own employment status. These were all presented as ways to make our work more meaningful, dynamic, sustainable, and ultimately more useful for our community.



*Maité Agopian, M.A.
Interactive Development Coordinator
Production Unit/Exhibit-Design-Media
UA Museum of the North (Fairbanks)*

Big Fred’s Bear Gut Parka

Wendy Goldstein

Prior to each Museums Alaska/ Alaska Historical Society Conference, museum professionals and paraprofessionals join together to help one of the host museums with a project. This has become known as the Angels Project. This year’s Angels Project was unlike any other. Elaine Kingeekuk is a Siberian Yupik elder from Savoonga on St Lawrence Island, and thanks to funding from Museums Alaska, the Rasmuson Foundation, the Cordova Historical Society, and the City of Cordova, she was in Cordova to help care for and repair a bear gut parka. We were here to observe and learn from her.

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The day-long project was led by Ellen Carrlee, Denis Keogh, and Scott Carrlee. When introduced to Elaine Kingeekuk, we were told that we could not take video or photographs of her to record the knowledge we were about to be gifted with. As we went around the room full of over 20 people and introduced ourselves, telling what our purpose was in being there, Elaine understood that we were not seeking forbidden proprietary knowledge, but true understanding of a process, based on a communal love of history and revered artifacts. She agreed to allow us to photograph her and the process, but in memory of Thomas Tungwenuk Jr., her “one and only.”

Elaine began to tell us of her ancestors, of her uncle who was a reindeer herder long ago, who wanted a school in Savoonga, and who made the town what it is today. She spoke of her name being pronounced in a manner that came from her relations across the Chukchi Sea. She related a tale of a boat full of her ancestors, hunters who landed on an island when bad weather overcame them, who stayed there and never returned, but who may have lived on among the people there. She spoke about underground tunnels, where the people would hide their ivories when enemies came, so they would not find them and take them. She said newawks, or man-shaped rock piles, would be placed to warn people not to walk there, as the tunnels could collapse, and were eventually destroyed so as to prevent danger to curious children. Elaine then sang for us. She sang of her uncle’s dream, of a hill, and a piece of grass, on top of the hill, that would bend back and forth, reaching up to the light, reaching out to the light.

Having captivated us, Elaine asked us questions in her quiet but strong voice, growing frustrated with our ignorance when we could not bring forth the exact correct answer for her. She taught us that parkas were tanned in different ways, some warm dried for waterproof use, some “winter tanned” or freeze dried to a bright white for windproof use. No urine or chemicals were used for tanning, just water and scraping. The parkas would be rolled up and placed in a cool, dry place when not in use. They would be inspected by the elders before use, to determine if any little holes were present, which could kill you. Tiny holes could let in cold air and wind and water and let out warm air. This was a very bad and very real danger.

Elaine and her helpers finally rolled out the bear gut parka, which had been made by “Big Fred” Tedishoff, an Aleut/Russian man, 80-100 years ago. Judging by the parka’s size, he had made it for himself. The brittle parka had been hanging on display in the Cordova Historical Society for decades, and was in need of mending as well as a new mannequin. The parka had been left inside-out when the owner last took it off. It was brittle not just from drying out, but also from the years of UV exposure, which caused the long molecular chains of protein in the gut material to link



Elaine Kingeekuk Siberian Yupik elder from Savoonga on St Lawrence Island, sharing understanding of a process based on a communal love of history and revered artifacts.

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together and become less flexible. Knowing how gut skin moves and behaves, Elaine was able to wet the parka down with pure water (she preferred rain water) and very soft paper towels. This made the skin flexible again, and she was able to very slowly and gently turn it right side out.

Still damp, the parka was pliable enough for Elaine to stitch the tears. She used Minke whale sinew, a traditional material she is comfortable working with. When asked why she didn't use commercial thread, she explained that sinew and gut expand and contract at the same rate, both being natural animal materials. Commercial thread is intractable and may therefore further tear the gut during humidity fluctuations.

While mending was going on, a new mannequin was created in the correct size for "Big Fred" Tedishoff's parka. Scott Carrlee showed participants the basics of mannequin making, showing how ethafoam could be carved down to the size and shape of a body, rounded out, if needed, with polyester batting, and covered with medical grade stockinet, a pure cotton knit. He advised hand washing the stockinet first in Woolite to remove any sizing present. Another great material he advocated for use in mannequins is Tyvek, as it is stable and soft, and can be made even softer by washing it.

We had a lively discussion on the question of what the head and face of a mannequin should look like? Should it be a blank white oval shape? A more realistic face? If a face, what type of face? A specific ethnicity, color? If too realistic, a mannequin tends to look creepy, but with no head at all, it also looks creepy. The colors used can affect the way viewers perceive the clothing artifacts on mannequins. An exhibit designer has to think very carefully about these choices.

After four more days of work by Elaine, the parka was repaired and slowly dried. A week after the conference, Ellen Carrlee returned to Cordova, and she and Denis Keogh spent two full days completing the mannequin and mounting the parka onto it. At last "Big Fred's" bear gut parka is ready to educate many more generations. Perhaps as important, about 20



Big Fred's Bear Gut Parka.

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museum professionals gained some traditional knowledge of gut skin, how it was made, how it behaves, and how to better appreciate and care for gut skin artifacts. The walrus gut skin parka I found in my museum’s collection will certainly benefit from this Angel’s Project and the education I received through Elaine. I guess instead of being the angels, we were visited by one.

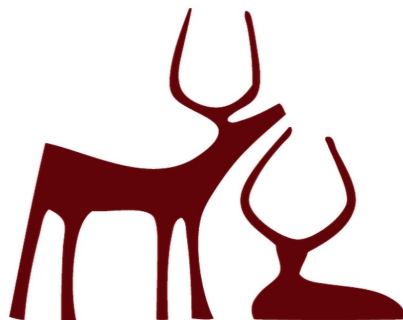
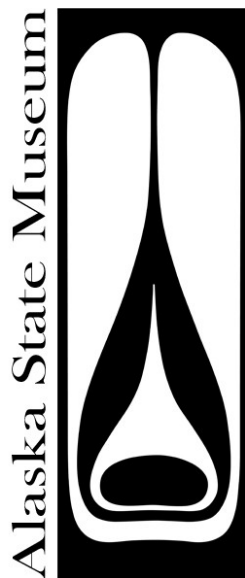
The knowledge shared during this Angels Project is dedicated in memory of Thomas Tungwenuk Jr.

Wendy Goldstein
Museum & Community Engagement Coordinator
Maxine & Jesse Whitney Museum, Prince William Sound College (Valdez)

Thanks for attending AHS/MA 2015!

A big round of applause for MA’s Program Committee and the Cordova Host Committee for all their work preparing the 2015 conference.

Thank you also to the Alaska State Council on the Arts and the Alaska State Museum for their support, which is so vital to Museums Alaska’s conference.



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2016 Governor Award recipients announced

Congratulations to the recently-announced recipients of the 2016 Governor's Awards for the Arts and Humanities!

They are:

Governor's Awards for the Arts

- *Lifetime Achievement Award*: June Rogers, Fairbanks
- *Individual Artist Award*: Pat Garley, Palmer
- *Arts Advocacy Award*: Nancy DeCherney, Juneau
- *Margaret Nick Cooke Award for Alaska Native Arts and Languages*: Vicki Soboleff, Juneau

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- Cyrano's Theatre Company, Anchorage
- Steve Henrikson, Alaska State Museum Curator of Collections, Juneau
- Lucy "Ahvaiyak" Richards, Iñupiaq Language Instructor, Barrow
- *Alaska Studies Educator of the Year*: Marc Swanson, Kenai Mountains-Turnagain Arm National Heritage Area Curriculum Developer, Seward

The Alaska State Council on the Arts recognizes tremendous individuals and organizations that contribute to our lives in Alaska. These awardees will be honored during the Governor's Awards ceremony in Juneau on January 28, 2016. If you cannot join in person, be sure to watch the live broadcast on Alaska Public television!

Cannery History Grant Program

The Alaska Historical Society is pleased to announce the Alaska Historic Canneries Initiative's small grant program. Proposals are sought for projects that document, preserve, and educate about seafood industry history in Alaska. Grants of up to \$1000 will be awarded to support a variety of projects. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2016. The deadline for applications is January 1, 2016. Organizations and individuals are encouraged to apply.

For more information about the initiative, the grant program, and eligible projects, please see AHS's website, www.alaskahistoricalsociety.org.

Grants available for Alaska Treaty of Cession projects

(Anchorage, AK) – The Alaska Historical Commission is seeking matching grant proposals to plan and prepare for the 150th anniversary of the Alaska Treaty of Cession in 2017. The grants are available for projects that will contribute to understanding the history and significance of the event. Proposals are encouraged for historic research and publication projects, restoration of significant historic properties, community projects and programs, heritage tourism development, planning and public education projects.

A total of \$125,000 is available. A grant request may not exceed \$15,000 and must be matched one-to-one. Projects are to be done between April 1, 2016 and September 30, 2017. Applications must be postmarked, e-mailed, or delivered by 4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 22, 2016.

Additional information and the application are available at www.dnr.alaska.gov/parks/oha/index.htm. Or call 907-269-8714, e-mail oha@alaska.net, or write to the Alaska Historical Commission, 550 West 7th Avenue, Suite 1310, Anchorage, AK 99501-3565.

CONTACT: Joan (Jo) Antonson, 907-269-8714, jo.antonson@alaska.gov

Seminar schedule announced

The National Preservation Institute, a nonprofit organization founded in 1980, educates those involved in the management, preservation, and stewardship of cultural heritage. The NPI seminar schedule is available at www.npi.org.

[Advance registration rate available through December 23, 2016](#)

National NAGPRA Program scholarships and travel grants may be available. Registration information at www.npi.org/register.html

Seminars held in cooperation with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Office of History & Archaeology / State Historic Preservation Office and the National Park Service, Alaska Support Office and National NAGPRA Program



Joellen Bye (left) presented with her Volunteer of the Year Award at Talkeetna Historical Society monthly board meeting. Well done, Joellen!

Alaska Veterans Museum had a fan-damn-tastic November

November 2015 started out with a huge blast as our "Telling Our Stories" Gala raised \$26,000 for us. We sold out the Anchorage Museum at Rasmuson Center's Atrium. We had a live auction, games, silent auction, and Mr. Phil Schrier, the Curator of the National Firearms Museum in Fairfax VA as our guest speaker. The crowd was enthusiastic, enjoyed an exceptional meal catered by the Muse and hated to leave us. A great time was had by all.

Then came the always hectic Veterans' Week where AVM provided speakers, hand-outs, table displays and more. We were busy the entire week which culminated with our 70th Anniversary of the End of World War II "A Memory Without Borders" extravaganza at AMVETS Post 2 in Anchorage. We had 60 guests who enjoyed a catered meal, speakers, three Service High school JROTC Cadets in authentic USAAF, USMC and USN WW II uniforms, as well as an Active Duty Army Specialist in an authentic US Army WW II combat uniform. We also had Russian folk dancing, Russian, Czech and American music and speakers from Latvia, the Czech Republic, Poland and Russia. Local WW II historian Mike McLaughlin spoke on how the war impacted Alaska, and Dr. Rachel Mason the Cultural Anthropologist told of the Aleut Relocation.

We are also awaiting word on whether or not we will receive a \$10,000 educational grant from First National Bank to pay transportation costs for school students to tour AVM and also help with transportation costs of our Traveling Footlocker to send the AVM to folks who cannot come to us!

In December we will hang the 1943 Aerial Target Drone in the mall area of the 4th Ave Market Place and then in Dec-Jan we will be: redesigning the front of the museum: putting up new exhibits to the Washington Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System (WAMCATS) and the follow-on Army Communications System; a tribute to the US Geologic Survey Commissioned Corps crewmembers who perished in Alaska in WW II; the *USS WORDEN DD-352* and her 14 sailors lost off Amchitka on 12 Jan 1943; a US Coast Guard exhibit showing BMC Hal Farrar's photos and documents, oral history and a set of utilities from the son-in-law of Ken & Diane Monti; the story of MSgt Percy Blatchford, the boxing champion of Alaska Defense Command, a WW II Scout, a USAF Pararescue and a military dog musher. We hope to finally have on loan Maj Marvin "Muktuk" Marston's revolver and rifle as well as a 7-8' long piece of baleen scrimshawed with tributes to the Alaska Territorial Guard.

We will also redesign our store and offer many more items. Come down to AVM in late January to see all our handiwork! Still the biggest bargain in Anchorage; best \$3 you'll ever spend. We tell fan-damn-tastic stories and 99% of them are true!

Kodiak Maritime Museum Hosts Third Annual Harbor Lights Festival



Kodiak Maritime Museum hosted the 3rd Annual Kodiak Harbor Lights Festival on Saturday, December 19, from 5-9 p.m. As in past years, the festival featured Kodiak’s commercial, sport, and personal vessels decorated with lights to celebrate the winter holiday season and Kodiak’s fishing heritage.

As part of the festival, the public is encouraged to walk the floats and view the decorated boats in the downtown St. Paul Harbor and at St. Herman’s Harbor on Near Island. An Open House at the Harbor Convention Center included caroling by local organizations, light refreshments, visiting with friends and neighbors, and voting for Best Decorated Boat. A silent auction is also held to help support Kodiak Maritime Museum.

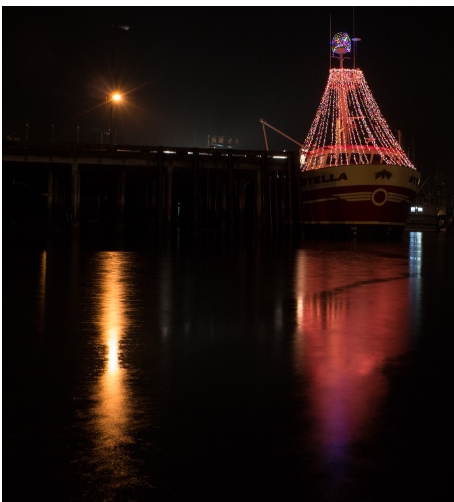
To encourage participation by Kodiak’s fleet, the museum awarded prizes donated by local merchants to the top three vote getting boats.

The event was begun in 2013 as a way to show appreciation for Kodiak’s fishing fleet, and to encourage people to spend time and shop in the downtown harbor area. In 2014, hundreds of people walked the harbor floats during the festival and more than 450 people cast ballots for “Best Decorated Boat.” Live music was provided at the Harbor Convention Center by the St. Innocents Academy Choir, Isle Bells, and the Kodiak Girl Scouts.



A grant from the Kodiak Community Foundation helped the museum host the event. Gift certificates to the top three decorated boats were provided by Sutliff’s True Value Hardware, and auction items were donated by Alaska Pacific Seafoods, the Alutiiq Museum, CostSavers, Harborside Coffee, Kodiak Island Brewery, Kodiak Marine, and Subway and private individuals. Dozens of volunteers helped serve coffee, hot chocolate, and cookies, and run the auction.

For more information please contact Kodiak Maritime Museum at 486-0384, or toby@kodiakmaritimuseum.org. Find updates on the event on our Facebook page and at our website, www.kodiakmaritimuseum.org.



Photos by Pam Foreman.



The Statewide Museum Association

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